Wardle

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ADVERTISED
PLAN

Northcote Village

Urban Context Report



June 2026

&W

Urban Context Report

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri-willam People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which Northcote Village stands.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Document Title: Northcote Village Urban Context Report

Document No: AR-RPT-001

Issue History:

01	05.06.26	Submission

Consultant Team:

→ Architect	Wardle
→ Urban Designer	Urbis
→ Landscape	Openwork
→ Traffic	Traffix
→ Waste	Traffix
→ ESD	IGS
→ Services	IGS
→ Structure	Webber
→ Fire Engineering	Square 1
→ Civil	Webber
→ Wind	RWDI
→ Consulting Building Surveyor	United
→ Acoustic	Acoustic Logic
→ Arborist	John Patrick

This report is to be read in conjunction with accompanying documentation, including:

→ Architectural Drawings
→ Planning Report
→ Landscape Planning Report and Drawings
→ Sustainable Management Plan
→ Services and Civil Authority Infrastructure Report
→ Waste Management Plan
→ Traffic Report
→ CFD Environmental Wind Report

The Urban Context Report has been prepared by Wardle with contributions and input from Openwork (landscape sketches, diagrams, renders and text).

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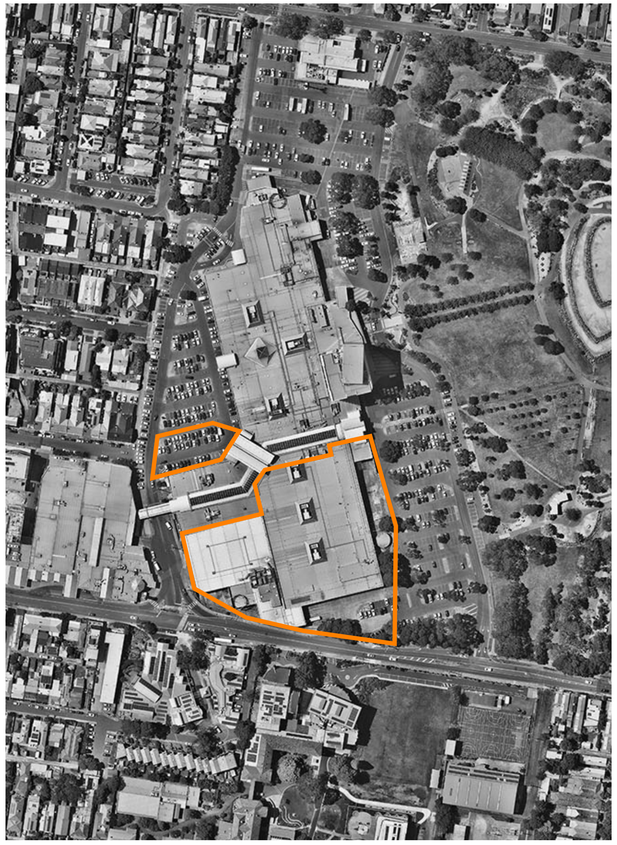


Section
01—

Introduction

Northcote Village is a proposal for a mixed-use residential and retail precinct on a significant site in Northcote adjacent All Nations Park

The proposal contains ca. 670 apartments, and offers a mix of dwellings, including studio, 1, 2 and 3-bedroom apartments and townhouses. The development is supported by ground floor retail functions anchored by a full line supermarket.

Internal and outdoor residential amenities are focused on the landscaped podium rooftop, with ancillary amenity spaces located on tower rooftops.

The podium has three levels of car parks, including a single basement, with bike parking and end of trip facilities supporting both the retail and residential functions.

Northcote Village places strong emphasis on establishing a distinct, local identity with clearly defined entries, variance in building silhouette and a generous landscaped public realm.





Section
02—

Vision & Process

Vision & Project Process

In 2025 Time & Place engaged Wardle to explore an alternative proposal for the 25 Separation Street site, which had a previously developed scheme approved by VCAT.

The site is currently occupied by large format retail tenancies that provide limited public benefit. The proposed scheme presents a significant opportunity to deliver a vibrant retail precinct and local neighbourhood hub that serves existing and future Northcote residents.

Time & Place and Wardle's vision is to deliver high quality housing that complements and builds upon the established character of Northcote. The proposal integrates a highly active and considered ground plane into the urban fabric, enhancing walkability, safety and the broader pedestrian experience.

In preparing this submission, the project team has undertaken several consultations sessions with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA). The timeline for this consultation process is outlined below:

DTP Review 01	DTP Review 01	OVGA Review 01	OVGA Review 02	OVGA Review 03	OVGA Review 04	Planning Application
17.09.25	16.10.25	12.11.25	13.01.26	01.04.26	28.05.26	

The feedback received from DTP and OVGA has been instrumental in developing the design proposal for Northcote Village. Feedback following the 4th OVGA meeting has indicated support for the scheme presented with comments to consider and further interrogate in the next design phase.

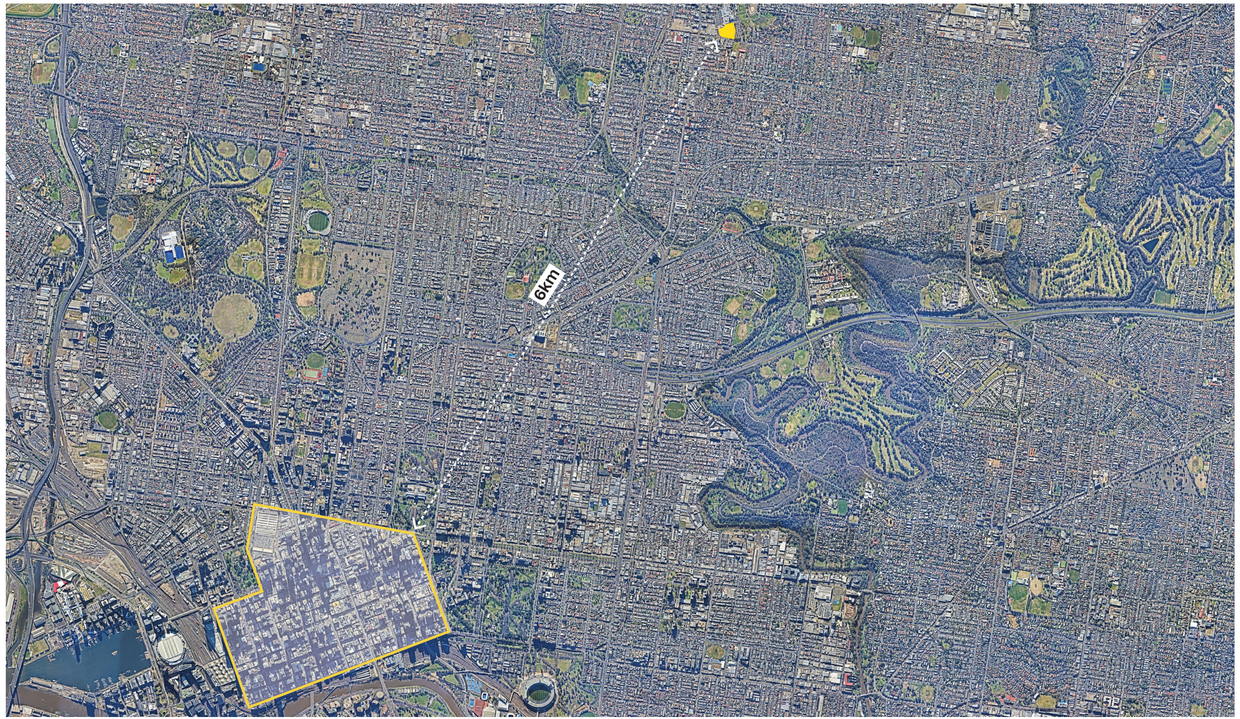


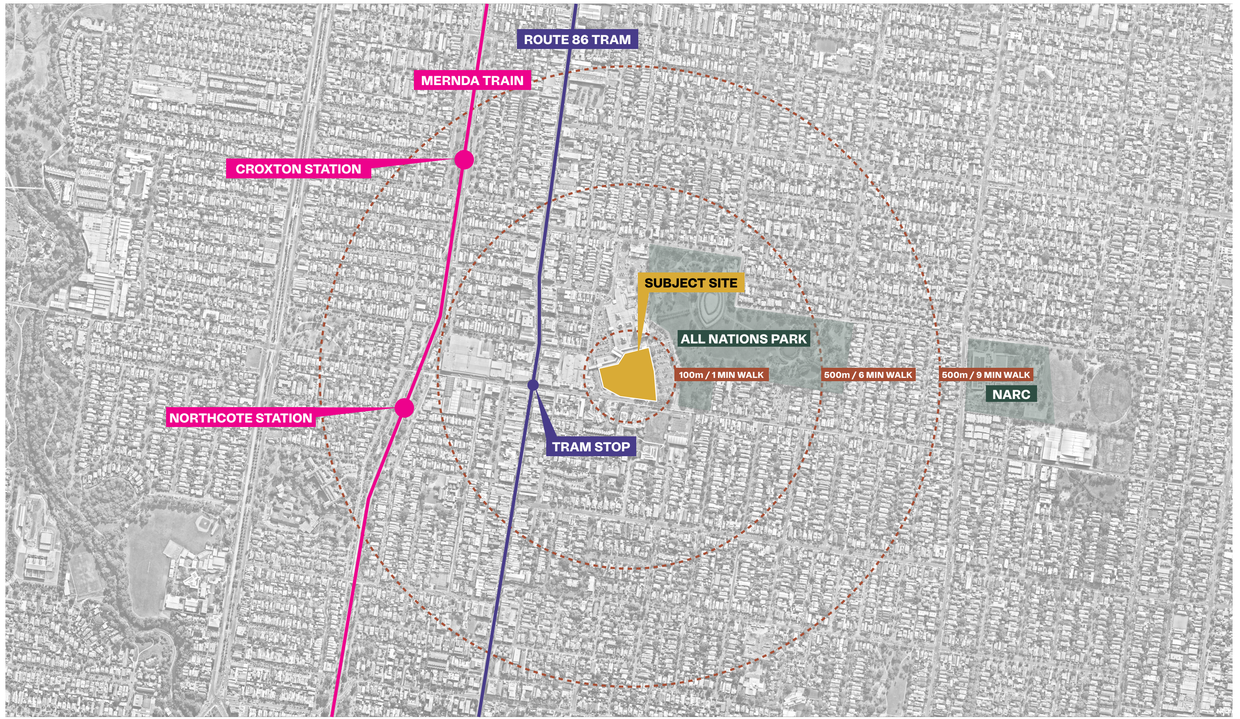


Section
03—

Site Information

Site Location





Site Overview

The project site is split into two distinct portions. The primary site includes the southern section of the existing Northcote Plaza, which is currently occupied by two large-format retail tenancies. The secondary site comprises an area of the existing Northcote Plaza carpark adjacent to the shopping centre entrance nearest Robbs Parade.

The northern boundary of the site interfaces directly with the remainder of Northcote Plaza, which will remain operational during and after construction.

Directly east of the site is a Council-owned carpark currently leased to Northcote Plaza. Beyond this lies All Nations Park, the largest public park in Northcote.

The southern boundary is defined by Separation Street, a key east-west vehicular link. Opposite the site are Santa Maria College, the Northcote Library, and the Northcote Community Health Centre.

To the west of the site is a private road located within the common property of the Northcote Plaza land. Further west is the Northcote Central shopping centre, another internal retail development that connects Northcote Plaza to High Street.



Immediate Site and Surrounds

















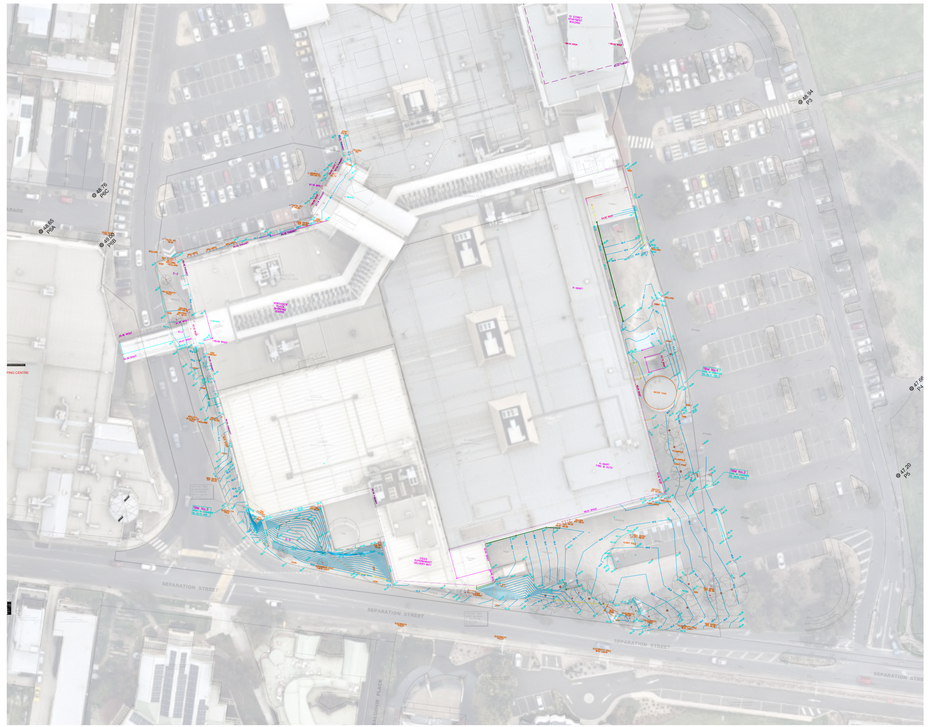


Existing Conditions

The site is currently occupied by two large format retail tenancies: an operational Coles and a non-operational Kmart.

These existing buildings directly interface with the Northcote Plaza along their northern boundary.

The SE of the site is occupied by the Coles loading dock and hardstand which is accessed via the Council carpark.



The primary site has significant falls across its length, falling from the high point in the South West corner to a low point in the North East corner. A level variance of 4.16m is recorded across the site.

The secondary site is relatively flat, being contained largely within an existing carpark.

The primary site area is 13,510 m², while the secondary site is 1,220m², giving a combined site area of 14,730 m².



Site History

The Northcote Plaza site is characterised by a significant industrial and municipal history that has impacted the site's topographical conditions and shaped its future development.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the precinct was the location of the Northcote Brickworks. This operation involved extensive deep-excavation quarrying to extract clay for brick production, an industry that was central to the early physical development of the broader Melbourne metropolitan area.

As quarrying activities became unviable, the site was partitioned for different uses. The eastern section of the former quarry was sold to the local council and repurposed as a large tip, which operated for several decades. The western portion was slated for commercial redevelopment following the decommissioning of the brickmaking kilns. This culminated in the construction of the Northcote Plaza Shopping Centre in 1981.

In the late 1990s, the eastern landfill underwent a comprehensive environmental remediation and landscape transformation process. This resulted in the establishment of All Nations Park, a 13-hectare public open space completed in 2002. Today, the redevelopment of Northcote Plaza represents the next chapter in this evolution, seeking to integrate the commercial precinct more fluidly with its parkland neighbour.



Above: The quarry repurposed as a general tip



Above right: The Northcote Brickworks quarry during operation early in the 20th century

Below: An aerial view of the Northcote Brickworks





Bottom right: Northcote Plaza retail operations in the early 1990's

Context Analysis

Local Character and Context

Northcote is predominantly characterised by low-scale residential development, featuring a significant portion of housing stock dated from the Victorian, Federation and post-war era. This residential fabric is punctuated by two primary urban features that define Northcote's identity: the High Street commercial corridor and All Nations Park.

High Street serves as the area's primary activity centre, characterised by a concentration of commercial use and emerging mid-rise developments. This has fostered a fine-grain urban streetscape, defined by narrow shopfronts and high levels of pedestrian activity. In contrast, All Nations Park offers a substantial 13-hectare expanse of open green space and public amenity. This parkland acts as a necessary civic counterpoint to the high-density, fine-grain intensity of the High Street strip

Urban Integration and Connectivity

The existing Northcote Plaza represents a significant physical impediment to the movement of pedestrians between High Street and All Nations Park. The shopping centre's orientation is dictated by the historical excavation lines of the former quarry, a legacy that sits at odds with the established street grid of the surrounding neighbourhood. This creates a disconnected urban island rather than an integrated precinct.

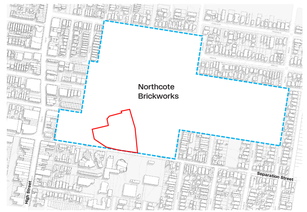
Connectivity is further compromised by the expansive at-grade car parking that rings the building, prioritising vehicular access over pedestrian safety and legibility. Primary connection between High Street and the park is provided via the building's internal malls. These routes are entirely internalised, offering no visual connection to the parkland and failing to provide any meaningful public amenity or civic presence.

Site Ownership and Development Potential

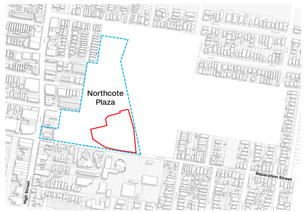
The complicated ownership structure of the Northcote Plaza and surrounding carpark has limited the potential for a holistic redevelopment of the entire precinct to date.

Northcote Plaza ownership is broken into many separate strata titles, with decisions relating to development within the Plaza requiring unanimous agreement amongst title holders. The shared internal malls and surrounding carpark and roadways fall under Common Property.

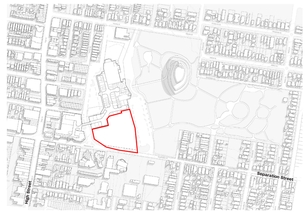
The Eastern portion of the carpark abutting the All Nations park is owned by the Darebin Council, currently leased to the Northcote Plaza on a long-term agreement.



Extent of the historic Northcote Brickworks quarry



Extent of Northcote Plaza



Subject site extent



High Street Northcote commercial corridor



The fine grain of commercial and residential activity contrasted with the open space of All Nations Park



Northcote Plaza impedes direct pedestrian access via the existing street network pattern through to All Nations Park



Current pedestrian connection routes



The ownership structure of the wider precinct



The development potential of the plaza parcels

Section 04—

Masterplan

Masterplan

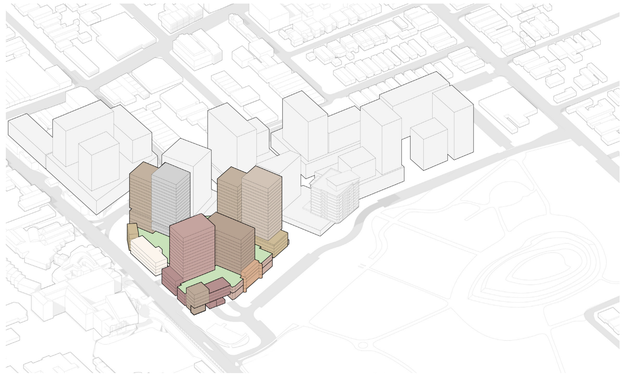
The proposed masterplan looks beyond the immediate scope of this project to establish a long-term vision for the comprehensive redevelopment of the entire Northcote Plaza precinct - setting up future projects for success.

Central to this vision is the restoration of urban connectivity between High Street and All Nations Park. By extending the established local street network through the site, the plan replaces the current island development with a series of green links. These pedestrian focused corridors effectively extend the amenity of All Nations Park into the heart of the new precinct and to High Street beyond

These new East-West connections define distinct development lots designed to support a vibrant, mixed-use residential and retail precinct. This structure also facilitates the inclusion of civic infrastructure, such as the potential relocation of the Northcote Library.

Along the eastern boundary, the masterplan proposes transforming the existing surface car park into a formal extension of All Nations Park. This involves the realignment of Breavington Way to run adjacent to the site's eastern edge, creating a new retail street activated by the frontages of the Northcote Village development.

While the current project scope must adhere to existing title boundaries and site conditions, its design is strategically engineered to be future-proof, ensuring it does not preclude the eventual delivery of the broader precinct vision.





Current project scope - Development of the southern section of Northcote Plaza and NW carpark



Intermediate Phase - Development of the eastern carpark, current Aldi site (Northcote Central), targeted Northcote Plaza retail tenancies and realigning Breavington Way



Final Phase - A holistic development of the Northcote Plaza precinct



Section
05—

Design Principles



Park as Agent



Regeneration



A Neighbourhood Identity



Light, Outlook and Spatial Generosity

Park as Agent

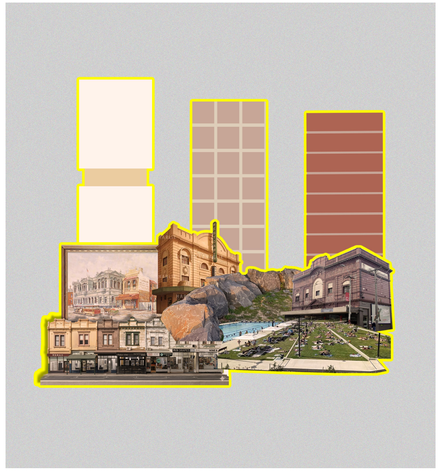


Our ambition is to see how the scale of the Park might condition the redevelopment of the Plaza in a way where the presence and amenity of the All Nations Park is expanded and enriched rather than reduced or diminished. By doing so, it develops a series of public realm types around Northcote Plaza that become Park-like: that is, emphatically green, ecological, connected and public.

Key landscape aspirations are:

>Large canopy trees located in areas of terra firma.
>Trees within the influence of landfill in strata vault.
>A double row of trees against main pedestrian paths.
>Mounding and topography to reference All Nations Park.
>The use of brick and brick aggregate as material memory.
>Opportunistic planting in streets and edges.

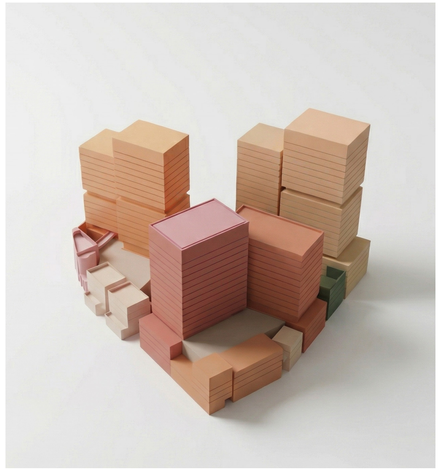
Regeneration



The existing Northcote Plaza is representative of late 20th century large format retail typologies. It is a large singular development defined by completely internal retail trading environments and inactive external frontages, which create a poor-quality public realm with no sense of place. Reliant on vehicular access, the associated carparking further impacts any potential to meaningfully integrate with the surrounding context. Northcote Village presents the opportunity to reassess this approach to retail development; creating a place that is active, green and provides a sense of civic generosity.

The project looks to the fine grain Victorian and Federation era brick shopfronts of High Street for cues on creating a successful and unique retail precinct. By applying and scaling up the celebrated characteristics of Northcote - its mixture of intimacy, civicness, rhythm and quirk - this project seeks to avoid generic tropes of High Street mid-scale developments, making a leap in both quality and scale. The built form strategy responds sensitively to the surrounding characteristics while introducing a new architectural language that is both contemporary and contextual.

A Neighbourhood Identity

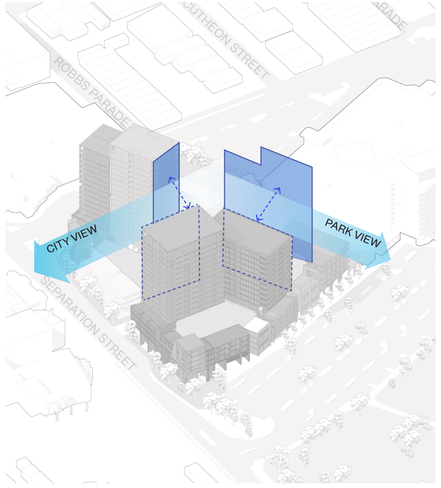


The project looks to create a unique sense of identity for the development while remaining sympathetic to the local neighbourhood character of Northcote. Links to the existing urban fabric are established through the selection of building materials and façade compositions which reference the scale and character of High Street.

A set of key spatial design moves are proposed which look to break down the development scale and create a more active, porous and green proposal that introduces a human scale to the precinct. These moves include;

>Residential lobbies addressing the street on all key frontages
>Building entries with strong connection to green spaces
>A human scaled podium street wall with shifts in building heights and widths
>Tower forms coming to ground
>Corner buildings holding key corners
>Breaking down tower masses through shifts in plan and heights

Light, Outlook and Spatial Generosity



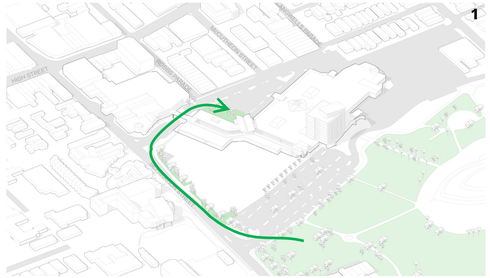
Buildings are to be configured in a way that prioritises occupant experience. The large project site allows for significant separation between towers, maximising access to natural light, views out and privacy. The green podium rooftop landscape provides amenity and connection to green space for residents.

The tower configuration responds to the key aspects of the site – Eastern views towards All Nations park and the Dandenongs, Southern views to the Melbourne skyline, and Northern views to capture sunlight. By dividing the massing in this way, the scheme also maintains clear visual separation between the buildings when viewed from key public vantage points.

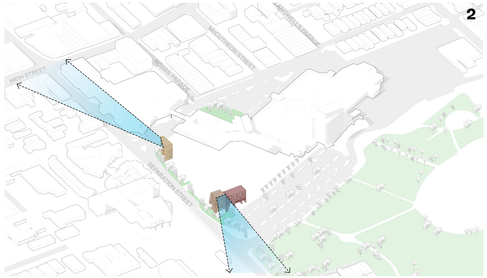
Section
06—

Massing Methodology

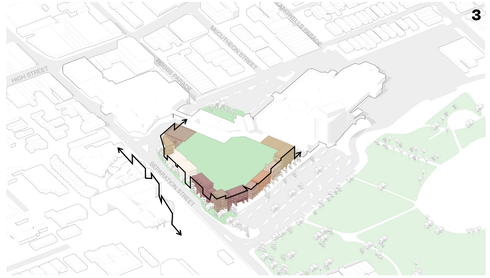
Contextual Response



1. Drawing All Nations Park around site through a series of landscape insertions.



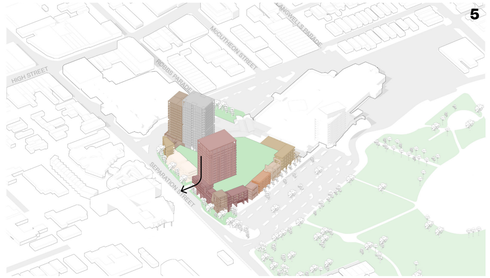
2. Addressing the corners along Separation Street, with clearly defined "lantern" masses.



3. A human scale street wall that responds to its context. Vertical breaks and shifts in height create a fine grain and rhythm.



4. Upper levels that come to ground and address the street.



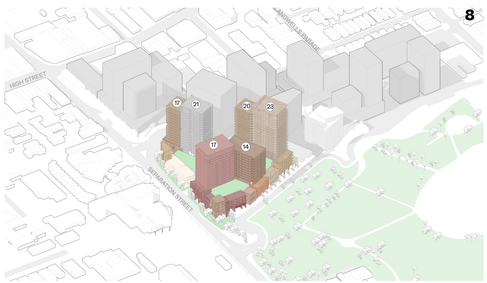
5. Upper levels that come to ground and address the street.



6. Upper levels that come to ground and address the street

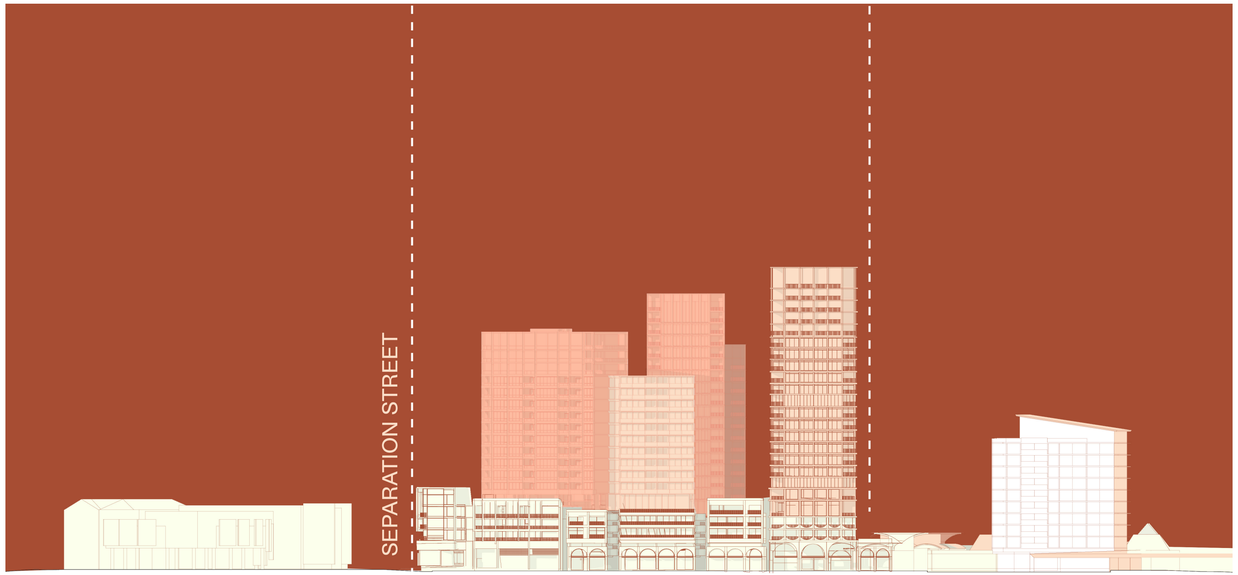


7. Upper levels that come to ground and address the street



8. A meaningful variance to building height setting up the future precinct.

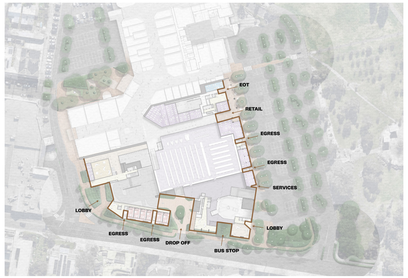
A Varied Silhouette



Design Principles



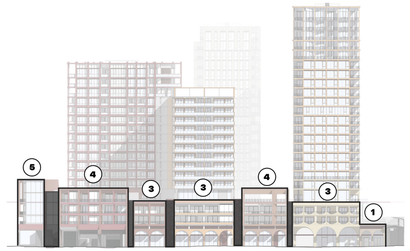
Park as Agent - a series of green spaces serve as extension of All Park



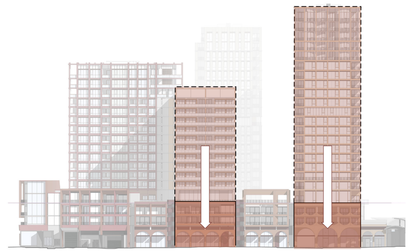
A Neighbourhood Identity - Breaks in podium mass baked into spatial planning



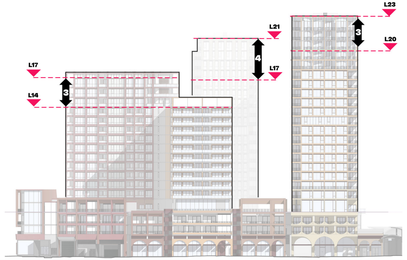
Light, Outlook & Spatial Generosity - Minimum dimensions tower separation and shadow gaps



Neighbourhood Identity - A varied podium wall height of human scale, with vertical breaks coming to ground



Neighbourhood Identity - Towers coming to ground



Neighbourhood Identity - varied heights to tower masses break down scale and create identity

Section
07—

A Focus on the Ground Plane

A Focus on the Ground Plane

Northcote Village provides a highly active ground plane that responds to key adjacencies and complex interfaces, creating a series of frontages with distinctly unique characteristics:

Separation Street

Regeneration of a poor-quality urban realm into an active green residential street

Eastern Carpark Interface

A new retail street forming the development's primary civic address

Northern Interface

An active internal retail connection linking into the existing Northcote Plaza

Western Interface

A new gateway building and landscape addressing High Street

North-West parklet

A forecourt to the existing Northcote Plaza linking to Robbs Parade

The proposal prioritises activated retail and residential frontages. Residential lobby entries are situated on all primary street frontages with strong relationships to the street, adjacent landscape zones and towers above.

Public retail parking access and supermarket loading is located to the Southeast of the site, separated from the primary retail and residential zones.

Residential parking access for both stages is consolidated into a single entry off Separation Street, with a dedicated arrival and drop off point adjacent Tower 2 lobby.



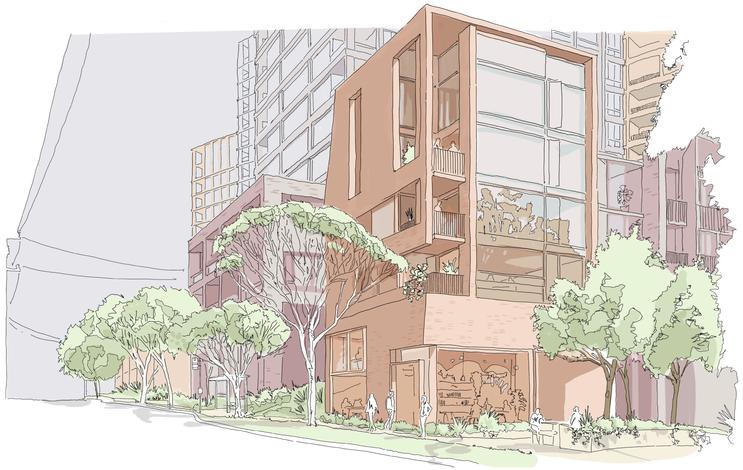
A Series of Landscape Moments

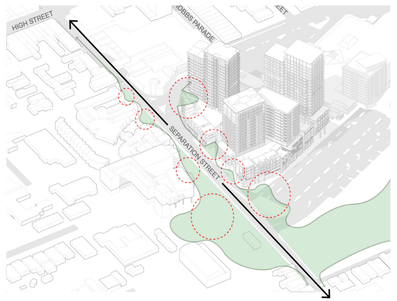
The Separation Street interface is envisioned as an active and sympathetically scaled residential street, punctuated by a series of landscape insertions, providing connection to green space for residents and vastly improving a deteriorated public realm.

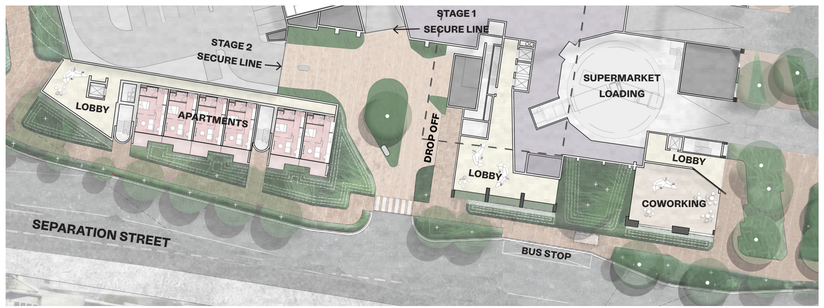
Apartments and lobbies address the street, with a redeveloped public realm and landscape buffer softening the street interface with residential tenancies.

The residential vehicle entry and associated drop off point forms a key arrival gesture serving the entire development.

The Southeast corner building is activated at ground with a residential amenity/co-working space which provides a diversity of active uses on street.







A New Retail Street

The Eastern edge of the development is a key public interface, providing a new tree-lined pedestrian boulevard activated by retail frontage. A generous urban footpath offers space for retail and F&B dining to spill onto the street, integrated with public furniture and bicycle parking.

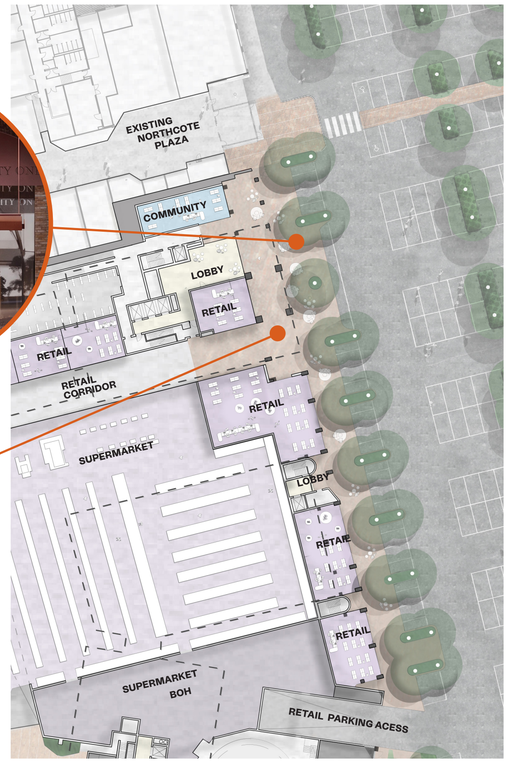
This frontage also serves as the entry point for a new internal retail connection, providing access to a new supermarket and the existing Northcote Plaza. The north-eastern tenancy, directly adjacent to Northcote Plaza, creates the opportunity for a new community offering.

The focus of public and retail uses along this edge responds to the adjacent Northcote Plaza, while pre-empting the future development of the Eastern carpark site and the realignment of Breavington Way.

Further activation is provided by multiple residential lobby entries along the length of the Eastern elevation.



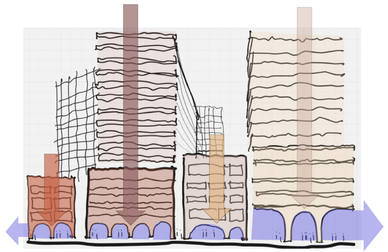


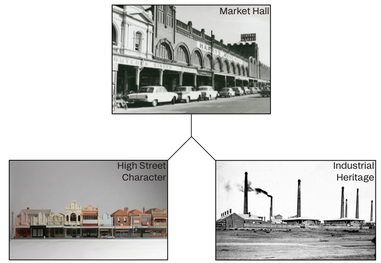


Retail Precinct

The architectural language of the Eastern frontage is informed by a tripartite narrative: the fine-grained character of traditional High Street shopfronts, the site's distinct industrial heritage, and the civic typology of a market hall. These are expressed through deliberate variations in scale, material, and colour across the facade, which are stitched together by a continuous colonnade running across multiple buildings.

A consistent approach to architectural detailing of the public ground plane establishes a cohesive environment that supports wayfinding for both residents and visitors that clearly articulates public and private building uses.







Western Interface

The Western interface provides a key elevation when approaching the site from High Street.

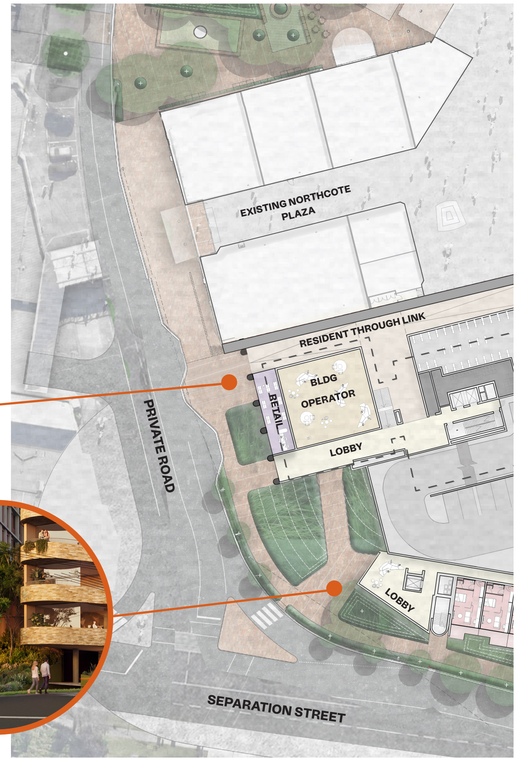
Tower 3 meets the ground plane, firmly anchoring the northern edge of the site, while a low-rise podium holds the corner of Separation Street and the private road, effectively mediating the oblique angle of their intersection.

This human-scaled building form transitions into a series of low-rise residential apartments along Separation Street.

Between these two primary building masses, a new deep-soil landscape zone is introduced, establishing an inviting, shared entry sequence to the respective building lobbies.







Robbs Parade Parklet

The NW site, currently occupied entirely by at grade carparking, is proposed to be redeveloped into a new urban parklet.

This space will provide a new public entry experience to the existing Northcote Plaza and strengthen pedestrian connections to High Street via Robbs Parade.

The landscape design references the site's history as a quarry; using brick and brick aggregate as a material memory, providing a tactile and formal connection with the precinct's formative history.

A flexible landscaping proposition, utilising removable planters along the southern edge allows for existing retail tenancies to trade directly onto this space in future.



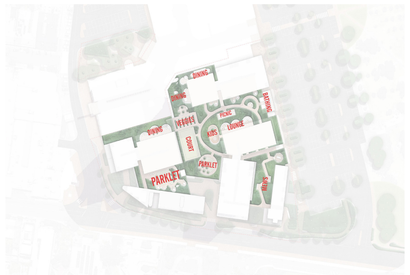


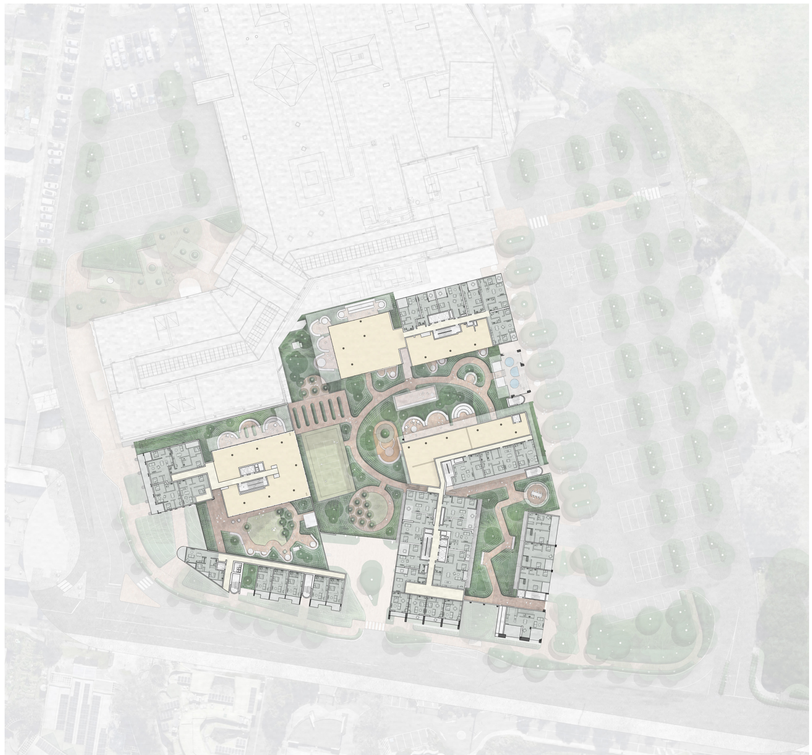
An Elevated Landscape

A generous podium rooftop space creates an expanded landscape, providing a diverse range of communal amenity spaces for building residents.

The podium landscape is a highly greened zone that provides a garden setting for the residential towers. A diverse mix of uses are proposed, with potential amenity offerings including sports courts, bathing facilities, communal eating/picnic areas, community gardens and semi-private mews areas.

The podium landscape will be separated along project staging lines, with dedicated facilities serving each title.







Section
08—

Project Staging

Staging Overview

The project is proposed to be split into two separate titles with the potential for a staged delivery.

Key components of each Stage as follows:

Stage 1:

>Tower 1, Tower 2 and associated podium apartments

>Ground floor supermarket and specialty retail

>Stage 1 residential carparking

>Basement retail carpark

>East podium landscape

>Separation St porte cochere/vehicle drop off

>Dedicated Stage 1 services

>Council carpark public realm upgrades

>Separation Street upgrades

>NW parklet

>Temporary landscaping to Northcote Plaza common property adjacent Stage 2 site

Stage 2:

>Tower 3 and associated podium apartments

>Ground floor through-link for Stage 2 residents

>Stage 2 residential carparking

>West podium landscape

>Dedicated Stage 2 services

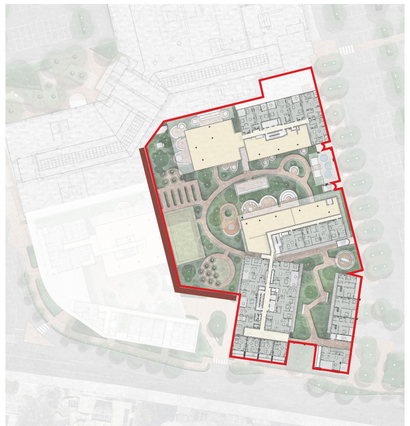
>Public realm upgrades to Northcote Plaza common property adjacent Stage 2 site



Interim Condition

Prior to the completion of Stage 2, the Western facades of Stage 1 are highly prominent.

High quality facades with relief and articulation are proposed on these facades so that the project reads as a cohesive and complete development in this interim stage.





Section
09—

Design Proposal

Renders



















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Section
10—

Facades & Materials

Facade Strategy - Materiality

The rich tapestry of Northcote's existing urban fabric and the site's history as a quarry and brickworks guided the façade development for the project.

The lower podium forms which define the street edge are to be predominantly brick buildings. This singular material ties them together as a cohesive precinct, while tonal shifts between masses creates variation and identity within a large development.

The tower facades utilise precast and lightweight cladding panels that respond in colour to the lower podium finishes. Subtle variations in tone between tower forms help to break down their mass.







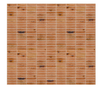
Exterior Palette

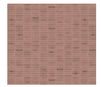
A layered exterior material palette has been developed for the project, informed by the rich and earthy tones of Northcote brick.


A - Brick Facade


B - Brick Facade


C - Brick Facade


D - Brick Facade


E - Brick Facade


F - Brick Facade


G - Brick Facade


H - Precast Concrete


J - Precast Concrete


K - Precast Concrete


L - Precast Concrete


M - Precast Concrete


N - Powdercoat Aluminium


P - Powdercoat Aluminium


Q - Powdercoat Aluminium


R - Powdercoat Aluminium


S - Powdercoat Aluminium


T - Powdercoat Aluminium


U - Powdercoat Aluminium


V - Powdercoat Aluminium


W - Powdercoat Aluminium

X - Clear Vision Glazing

Y - Spandrel/Backpan


Z - Garage Doors (Loading Dock and Basement Parking)

Annotated Render - Indicating Materials

